

# SOJOURN HOUSE

## 2011 ANNUAL REPORT



**KEEPING OUR  
DOORS OPEN  
TO REFUGEES**

# MESSAGE

## from the Executive Director



**Debbie Hill-Corrigan**  
Executive Director

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*"I urge you to celebrate the extraordinary courage and contributions of refugees past and present."*

*Kofi Annan, Past UN Secretary – General.*

In 2011 Sojourn House celebrated five years in our new building. In reflection it has been a time of growth, change and new learned experiences. We hosted visits from international and national delegates interested in our service model of shelter and transitional supportive housing, participated in interesting research projects on refugee settlement experiences and welcomed refugees from around the world; most notably Ethiopia, Eritrea, Hungary, Afghanistan, North Korea, Iran, Namibia, Nigeria, Burundi. It seems we have a reputation far and wide. More importantly, we have made a difference in the lives of all those who have passed through our doors. The many refugees who return to visit speak volumes. "You were our first home, our family in Canada".

It is difficult to find words of inspiration when faced with the current economic environment and the dark clouds of the omnibus Bill C-31 looming over us which will most likely have a dramatic effect on the ability of refugees to access asylum in Canada. If they are able to meet very short and unrealistic time frames to apply and are not from a "designated country" determined by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, they may make it to the process but will then have no access to health care. Sadly the information reported on the health care issue in the media was far from factual, implying that refugees receive better care than the average Canadian. The fact that most live in poverty and are one of the most vulnerable populations of our society remained unstated. My hat

goes off to all the national professional associations; health, medical, legal as well as municipalities across the country that have spoken out for those with no voice in this regard.

Hence our theme for this year's Annual Report "Keeping our Doors Open to Refugees".

Henry Ford, a former journalist from Uganda who spoke at the opening ceremonies of our new building and who's story appears on our website may never have been accepted under the new "designated country" even though he had been shot and had to flee for his life leaving behind his wife and two young daughters. He would not have had access to much needed corrective surgery, experiencing ongoing chronic pain which would limit his ability to become a contributing member of his new community.

Henry's story is inspiring. As you read "Where is Henry Now" on pg.6 keep in mind the resiliency of refugees to overcome their hardships. They are survivors from whom those of us privileged to be born in this great country can learn much.

My concern is how many will suffer or lose their life as a result of government policy which fly's in the face of who we are as nation; a nation of refugees and immigrants first welcomed by the First Nation Peoples.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge all the Board, staff and volunteers of Sojourn House who continue to welcome and walk with refugees.

# MESSAGE from the President

KEEPING OUR DOORS OPEN TO REFUGEES

Sojourn House derives its name from the Old French term to “stay temporarily.” The aim of Sojourn House is to provide respite for those individuals who come to Canada to escape persecution in their countries of origin. And by providing that support, Sojourn House fulfills its mission of providing a “safe place for refugees and a better world for all.” While the support that Sojourn House provides may be temporary, it is provided during the most crucial parts of a refugee’s journey, when he or she first arrives in Canada, makes his or her refugee claim, and takes those first steps to adjusting to a new country and a new life. The support that Sojourn House provides extends beyond its longstanding shelter program to include longer-term transitional housing, as well as support services to assist refugees with their difficult adjustment, and a warm and friendly environment where refugee claimants can connect with others who are undergoing similar challenges.

Sojourn House serves as a critical stepping stone in a refugee’s journey in Canada. At the same time, Sojourn House is undergoing its own journey as it continues to grow and develop to meet its clients’ needs, to advocate on their behalf and to address a shifting legal landscape.

In 2010 to 2011, Sojourn House underwent a comprehensive strategic plan to assist the agency with its growth and future challenges. A significant portion of the strategic plan addresses the role of the Board, which has been implemented this year. As Sojourn House continues to grow and develop, so does the role of the Board as it matures to a more

comprehensive governance model.

A major focus of the strategic plan is the emphasis on fundraising. This has meant the establishment of a fundraising committee on the Board and a short-term and long-term plan to increase Sojourn House’s sources of funding. This will continue to be a priority of the Board and the organization at large.

The emphasis on fundraising will assist in the long term as well as the short term. In the previous year, the agency has faced financial shortfalls, due to the unforeseen challenge of bedbugs which plagued the entire city. As Sojourn House provides housing to over one-hundred individuals at a time, the response had to be thorough and was necessarily costly.

The financial picture is certainly improving as Sojourn House recovers from the extraordinary expenses required to ensure the entire building is cleared of that challenge.

Like other agencies assisting refugees, Sojourn House, will have to deal with a changing legal landscape that drastically alters the refugee protection system in Canada. Shortened timelines and increasing legal restrictions mean that support services will have to be increased to reflect the changes to refugee law in Canada. As an active member of the Canadian Council for Refugees, Sojourn House will no doubt be at the forefront of advocacy for refugee rights even as those rights are threatened.

The work of the Executive Director, management, staff and volunteers of Sojourn House must be recognized. It is that work that has a real impact on the lives of refugees and by extension on the culture of this vibrant city. As the staff and management



**Ameena Sultan**  
*President of the  
Board of Directors*

and Executive Director deal with the daily details of the operation of the agency, as well as the serious issues and emergencies that arise, they help maintain and grow an agency that serves the needs of those who are most vulnerable.

I also must take this opportunity to recognize the clients who continue to stay at Sojourn House and make it their home. By making Sojourn House their home, no matter for how long, they help establish Sojourn House as a welcoming place.

It is my final year as a Board member of Sojourn House. It has been a privilege and a pleasure serving on the Board of this extremely important organization, and a particular honour to serve as President during my last year. As the Board welcomes its new members, and launches a new year, I look forward to an ever-vital agency that continues to meet its mandate of helping those most vulnerable, and making the rest of the world better for all of us.

# SHELTER PROGRAM



Keeping the doors open at Sojourn House has provided thousands of asylum seekers a “Safe World and a Better Future” in Canada. The Sojourn House Shelter Program has served as an important link for short-term housing and support service needs for refugees, refugee claimants and non-status individuals who aspire to make Canada their new home. To many refugee claimants, Sojourn House is a place where they spent their first night without fear of sleeping in a detention centre; or fear of being killed because of your sexual orientation and many of our female clients sleeping their first night without fear of gender violence. Asylum seekers to Canada are typically inundated by challenges they face as they seek to integrate within the Canadian society. Overcoming language barriers, delivering legal guidance for refugee claims and appeals, assistance with health, trauma, employment and housing issues are just a few of the services that Sojourn House provides for its’ clientele through its’ Settlement, Housing and Outreach Programs.

Throughout 2011, Sojourn House provided accommodation for 208 new residents. 182 residents were supported by the housing workers to move into the community. Many of these young men and women are well educated and will add value to the Canadian work force once they are settled in the country.

The Outreach Program provided services for 208 clients with 831 contacts with the Outreach Worker. The services included

follow-ups, referrals to other community agencies and support to exited clients with emotional, mental health and other health related issues. Other clients needed support with settlement related challenges such as completing forms, information, counselling and guidance. The Outreach Program continued to link clients with agencies to provide on-site services; some of these include: Toronto Public Health, Eritrean & Ethiopian Associations, Canadian Accessible AIDS Treatment, Immigrant Women’s Community Health Centre, and many more. Also former clients have come back as volunteers to provide support to Sojourn House clients.

Sojourn House has built strong partnerships with many government and non-governmental agencies. For Example, Sojourn House provides accommodation for clients from the Toronto Immigration Bail Program as they are released from the Immigration Holding (detention) Centre. Canada Border Services Agency has worked with Sojourn House to help in the facilitation of deportation of our clients to provide some dignity to the process. Crossroads Clinic at Women’s College Hospital has been our great partner working with our clients to holistically look at their health issues.

Sojourn House has been a conduit for asylum seekers from all over the world who need help to help themselves. We will continue to be the first safe home for those fleeing persecution and violence.

**DURING 2011**

**208**  
NEW RESIDENTS

**MOVE INTO THE COMMUNITY WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE HOUSING WORKERS**

**20%** SEPARATED YOUTH (16-25 YEARS)

**40%** ADULTS (26-35 YEARS)

**THE OUTREACH PROGRAM HELPED 208 CLIENTS**

REFERRALS  
SUPPORT  
FOLLOW UP

# TRANSITIONAL HOUSING PROGRAM

KEEPING OUR DOORS OPEN TO REFUGEES



Since 2006 Sojourn House has provided transitional supportive housing to hundreds of people looking for a safe place to live and begin their settlement process in Canada. In 2011, the transitional housing program saw an increased number of children and the number of one parent families. As a result, in 2011 new programs were developed with young single parent families in mind. We partnered with Parents for Better Beginnings and ran a series of parenting workshops to help parents adjust to Canadian society. The program was well received; it provided parents with parenting techniques, coping mechanisms and resources available in the larger community.

The majority of our residents consider education to be an important part of their integration into Canadian society. Most of them are attending some form of educational program such as English as a second language, elementary, high school and continuing education courses, College or University. In order to support their educational and career goals, a computer room was set up and academic support programs for groups of all ages initiated. There is a homework club for school age children where they receive one on one tutoring and support, academic support for

youths and adults where they are partnered with tutors and an essay writing program to help with English writing skills.

In the later part of 2011, a life skills program was introduced for the many young adults or separated youth as they are often referred. The program offers a safe space to share their experiences while learning about cooking, nutrition and budgeting.

Social activities have been an integral component of the transitional housing program since its inception. The activities provide residents with opportunities for social interaction with others of similar experiences and introduce them to available resources and networks. Many refugees particularly separated youth become socially isolated. Activities of the past year included information sessions on relevant and current topics, expressive arts, drumming, relaxation exercises, social gatherings and outdoor events. The annual trip to Niagara Falls is always a huge success.

All the programs and activities have helped to build a great and supportive community within Sojourn House resulting in lasting friendships after residents move on. The success of this program is the result of the resident's active involvement, volunteers and a dedicated staff team.



# Have you seen our new website?

[www.sojourhouse.org](http://www.sojourhouse.org)



In late 2011 Sojourn House, with the help of a volunteer committee of Board members, a former resident (also our Annual report designer/producer), our IT person and the Executive Director, realized the finalization of a new website for the agency. After working out the kinks the website went live in early 2012. We will continue to develop the website as a tool to enable the agency to maintain contact with former residents and to facilitate new membership and donations with the introduction of a facebook page and social media links.



### Donate Today.....as easy as one, two, three?

If you would like to support Sojourn House all you have to do is go to our website and with less than 3 clicks, one actually! you are on your way to ensuring that refugee children receive much needed school and program supplies, shelter clients have tokens to attend appointments and ESL classes and all our residents have access to services in their first language through the use of cultural interpreters. Donations also help with increased utility costs, replacement costs of furniture and furnishings in our housing units and general building upkeep.

**Please make a Donation**

## HENRY FORD: Where is Henry in 2012?

Half a dozen winters have passed by, several autumns have shed millions of leaves in millions of tons, and rains of human sweat sank in the summer soils since my time in the home-sweet-home at Sojourn House. My double-decker bed at the medieval structure that housed the homeless refugees is one piece of furniture I will never forget. It made my memory swing back home to reminisce on the double-decker beds at our country home in the village back in Africa in which my 10 siblings and I slept in a dormitory-like bedroom that accommodated our big family. It is as vivid as my last birthday. I can't push away the memory of collapsing toilets that had to be continuously repaired as some were being misused or were just too old to keep. Here were men, women and children of the most highly productive ages sitting in meditation or passing time playing cards or watching TV. Sighs of relief radiated on their faces. Worries would fade; the shy, like chicks hatching out of the eggs would suddenly begin

chatting and laughing, and yes, what else fits to be called a sojourn. Hey, this was just six years ago.

Today, the new five-year old Sojourn House stands towering over its neighborhood as a new multi-storeyed skyscraper in Toronto. I feel proud of it. And today, as I sit on my desk working; advising Canadians on how they can save money as a Direct Marketing Associate for the biggest North American communications company, only a heartless and senseless person would forget that little path in Sojourn House that threw me to my present day status in Canada. In this short six-year journey, I have met hundreds of other new immigrants that passed through the same or similar path and appreciate the Canada that first embraced the first settlers half a millennium ago. Though the circumstances were different, the land that welcomes all cultures and races always stands out as a leader in the new world. Today, I eat what I like. I sleep when



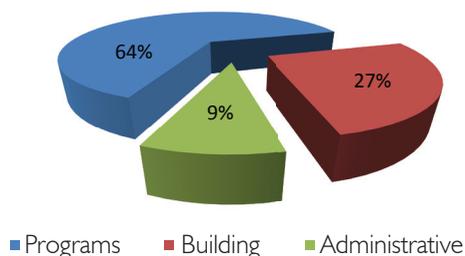
Henry Ford is a former client of Sojourn House, to read more about him please visit our website: [www.sojourhouse.org](http://www.sojourhouse.org)

I want; wake up when I wish; drive my own car; call and speak with my daughters - both of them at the university in Ottawa; phone on Skype to speak to the folks back home; and watch ice hockey on a glass of Jackson-Triggs red wine. What I am remaining to do is to take a trip to the North and hopefully sleep in an igloo... with my wife. Yoo-hoo! That is my Oh Canada

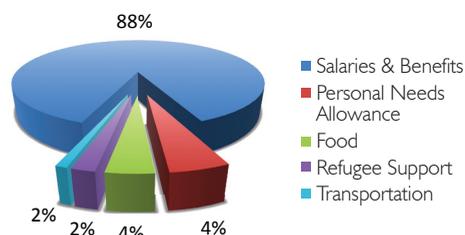
# FINANCIAL STATEMENT 2011

## TOTAL EXPENSES

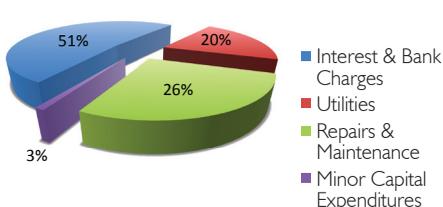
■ Salaries and benefits	\$ 1,521,412
■ Interest and bank charges	\$ 367,456
■ Repairs and maintenance	\$ 188,456
■ Utilities	\$ 145,095
■ Office and general	\$ 88,019
■ Consultants	\$ 81,646
■ Food	\$ 75,113
■ Personal needs allowance	\$ 73,048
■ Professional fees	\$ 48,773
■ Refugee support	\$ 37,989
■ Telephone	\$ 24,707
■ Minor capital expenditures	\$ 20,414
■ Transportation	\$ 4,735



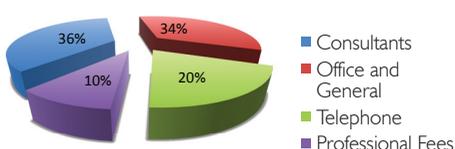
## PROGRAMS EXPENSES



## BUILDING EXPENSES



## ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES



## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

	2011	2010
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Current Assets:		
Cash	\$ 148,090	\$ 212,656
Restricted Cash (Note 8)	\$ 579,597	\$ 415,496
Guaranteed Investment Certificates	\$ 251,953	\$ 250,922
Accounts Receivable	\$ 220,077	\$ 375,433
Prepaid Expenses	\$ 20,907	\$ 14,283
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>\$ 1,220,624</b>	<b>\$ 1,268,790</b>
Capital Assets: (Note 4)	\$ 11,059,326	\$ 11,303,975
<b>TOTAL CURRENT AND FIXED ASSETS</b>	<b>\$ 12,279,950</b>	<b>\$ 12,572,765</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>		
Current Liabilities:		
Accounts Payable and Accrued Liabilities	\$ 193,667	\$ 138,070
Current Portion of Long-Term Debts (Note 5)	\$ 90,812	\$ 86,948
Deferred Revenue (Note 6)	\$ -	\$ 55,239
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>\$ 284,479</b>	<b>\$ 280,257</b>
Long-Term Liabilities:		
Deferred Capital Grant (Note 7)	\$ 2,946,980	\$ 3,035,980
Deferred Capital Donations	\$ 313,921	\$ 323,309
Long-Term Debts (Note 5)	\$ 7,000,427	\$ 7,091,239
<b>Total Long-Term Liabilities</b>	<b>\$ 10,545,807</b>	<b>\$ 10,730,785</b>
Net Assets:		
Restricted and Designated (Notes 8 & 9)	\$ 812,653	\$ 648,552
Unrestricted (Note 10)	\$ 921,490	\$ 1,193,428
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 1,734,143</b>	<b>\$ 1,841,980</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS:</b>	<b>\$ 12,279,950</b>	<b>\$ 12,572,765</b>

## STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

<b>REVENUE:</b>		
Government Funding (Note 11)	\$ 2,397,954	\$ 2,384,961
Donations to General Operations and Other	\$ 322,586	\$ 311,382
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$ 2,720,540</b>	<b>\$ 2,696,343</b>
<b>EXPENSES:</b>		
Programs	\$ 1,712,297	\$ 1,669,416
Building	\$ 721,421	\$ 632,919
Administration	\$ 243,145	\$ 228,325
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 2,676,863</b>	<b>\$ 2,530,660</b>
Excess of revenue over expenses for the year before non-operating revenues and expenses		
	\$ 43,677	\$ 165,683
Non-operating revenues and expenses:		
SCPI capital grant recognized (Note 7)	\$ 89,000	\$ 89,000
Investment income	\$ 3,935	\$ 4,176
Amortization	\$ (244,649)	\$ (244,649)
Excess of revenue over expenses before donations to specific funds		
	\$ (108,037)	\$ 14,210
Donations to specific funds	\$ 200	\$ 402

<b>EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES FOR THE YEAR</b>	<b>\$ (107,837)</b>	<b>\$ 14,612</b>
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Full Audited Financial Statements Prepared by Cowperthwaite Mehta Chartered Accountants are available from Sojourn House

# SOJOURN HOUSE

BUILDING A FUTURE FOR REFUGEES

Our vision: a safe world and a better future for refugees. Our mission: to provide a safe place and create an inclusive environment where refugees are supported and empowered to pursue a life in Canada.

## Core Values

- **Social Justice:** we advocate respect for human rights in the face of oppression and discrimination
- **Diversity:** we encourage and celebrate differences and inclusion
- **Compassion:** we support clients in a caring, rational and informed manner
- **Mutual respect:** we treat others with dignity and hold one another accountable for how we act and behave
- **Client-centred approach:** we focus on inclusive, culturally-sensitive programming that values the right to self-determination and promotes independence
- **Collaboration:** we promote thoughtful partnerships and agreements that engage the broader community
- **Integrity/transparency:** we hold a privileged position of trust with our stakeholders. We act with honesty and professionalism, guided by the highest standards of ethical conduct.
- **Entrepreneurial spirit:** we seek opportunities to learn, innovate, change and grow.



Visit us at [www.sojournhouse.org](http://www.sojournhouse.org)

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